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METROPOLITAN

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Metropolitan District Commission

Michael S. Dukakis
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Secretary

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Commissioner

Providing a Network of Services for Over Two Million People

The Metropolitan area enjoys many traditions, not the least of which is a century old commitment to preserving open spaces for public use. Since 1893, the Commonwealth, acting through the Metropolitan District Commission, has acquired parkland, set aside reservations and turned mud flats and flood plains into esplanades. The Commission built a transportation system to connect these open spaces with landscaped and scenic roads which are extensions of the parks themselves. To provide the indispensable element of security on the roads, in the parks, and on the waterways, the agency assembled the Metropolitan Police Department. Under one department, then, the Commonwealth created a multifaceted, regional agency dedicated to the environment, enhancing the region's quality of life and providing essential services to two and a half million citizens.

Today the public still enjoys that unique and integrated blend of services. We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to read on and learn even more about the programs and facilities that are available to the public through the Metropolitan District Commission.

Reservations and Interpretive Services

Nearly a dozen preserves with thousands of acres set aside for peace and quiet in the midst of the Metropolitan area; whether situated along local rivers or found on islands in Boston Harbor or poised atop the hills and peaks which surround the capital city, the metropolitan reservations system introduces the visitor to nature through hiking, camping, horseback riding, observation towers, and special programs about wildlife, flowers, trees and the extraordinary history of this historically rich region.

Metropolitan Police

New England's third largest police department comprising nearly twenty divisions or special units, each responsible for providing access and safety for the many millions of people who use the parks, roadways, reservations and waterways that comprise the Metropolitan District Commission system; special emphasis on harbor patrol and traffic safety as MetroPolice jurisdiction includes arteries and feeder roads which are the most heavily traveled in New England.

Watershed Management Pure Water

Responsible for overseeing and protecting reservoirs and watershed areas which provide pure drinking water to two and a half million people in Metropolitan Boston. The division manages the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs, many smaller water supply centers and the more than 100,000 acres of undeveloped watershed forests which surround these water supplies, thereby protecting them from contamination.

Metropolitan Parks and Beaches

An extensive network of esplanades, beaches, pools, ice skating rinks, athletic fields, playgrounds, golf courses, tennis courts, downhill and cross-country ski slopes, bike paths, fishing piers, canoe launches, sailing clubs, picnic grounds, zoos, boat launches and concert shells throughout thirty-five cities and towns; thousands of programs, places, concerts and special events for outdoor, active recreational use.

Metropolitan Parkways, Boulevards and Bridges

Over six hundred lane miles of roadway and nearly one hundred and forty bridges connecting and carrying traffic to and from metropolitan parks and reservations. While these roads also carry hundreds of thousands of commuters each day, they are considered extensions of the parks and waterfronts they connect. The care and landscaping they receive are intended to reinforce and protect this open space network and beautify the Commonwealth's capital city and its metro region.

Metropolitan Rivers and Dams

An extensive flood control network involving the Charles, Mystic and Neponset Rivers and many other lakes and streams where flood potential is controlled by over a dozen dams and pumping stations. This network can raise or lower the level of area waterways, protecting the metropolitan parks, roadways and reservation system, as well as other environmentally sensitive property and private homes which are located near the region's many riverbanks.

FACTS AND FIRSTS

The Charles River Basin was the first impoundment of an estuary in an urban environment.

The shore of the Charles River has 17.7 miles of continuous parkland and bicycle trails.

The Quabbin Reservoir is the second largest manmade impoundment of drinking water in the world.

Castle Island, in South Boston, is the oldest continuously fortified site in British North America.

The Metropolitan Parks Commission, predecessor to the M.D.C., was the first regional parks system in the United States.

Fort Warren, on Georges Island, is the largest fortification open to the public in the Northeast.

The M.D.C. serves fifty-four Massachusetts cities and towns with a population of 2.5 million.

The agency maintains over 15,000 acres of parks and reservations, 650 lane miles of parkways and boulevards and more than 100 bridges.

The oldest working weather station in the United States is located in the MetroParks Blue Hills Reservation.

The first public artificial skating rink is the agency's Ulin Rink in Milton.

The first public mechanical ski lift in the United States was installed at Big Blue.

The oldest public bathing beach in the United States is MetroParks' Revere Beach.

METROPOLITAN PARKS SYSTEM

In 1892, Frederick Law Olmsted and his young apprentice, Charles Eliot, proposed the creation of a Metropolitan Parks System. Both men believed that particularly in a crowded urban area, people needed easy access to and contact with nature and open space in order to relax, unwind and escape the daily pressure of city life. To that end Eliot was assigned the task of developing a plan that would provide the growing city and its suburbs with scenery, parks and reservations to be held in perpetuity for the public's use and enjoyment.

Eliot's idea was to set aside beachfront along the bay, land along the Charles, Mystic and Neponset Rivers and high ground throughout the Metropolitan area, and to turn this property into regional parks. He envisioned the creation of a series of parkways and roads built and maintained with aesthetics in mind, to make travel between the parks easy and attractive. By 1900 Eliot's design had begun to take shape as the state created the Metropolitan Parks Commission and placed with it 9,177 acres of reservations, 13 miles of ocean frontage, 56 miles of riverbank and seven parkways. Since then, the system has grown. The Commission acquired and preserved thousands of additional acres of parkland that fit into Olmsted and Eliot's original design. It also built new parks, skating rinks, swimming pools, athletic fields, band shells and other recreational outlets. Even today, more property is being preserved; more historical sites are being restored; more ways to make the regional parks system safe and accessible and attractive are being devised.

Nearly a century after Olmsted and Eliot's pioneering began, their vision remains strong; our metropolitan parks system remains vibrant.

We can only maintain this great park system with public support and cooperation. Please do your part by respecting each property and complying with all rules and regulations. Thank you.

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